



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Applications for New Awards; Strengthening Institutions
Program

AGENCY: Office of Postsecondary Education, Department of
Education.

ACTION: Notice.

Overview Information:

Strengthening Institutions Program

Notice inviting applications for new awards for fiscal year
(FY) 2015.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:
84.031A.

Dates:

Applications Available: [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE
FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: [INSERT DATE 45
DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: [INSERT DATE 105
DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Full Text of Announcement

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Purpose of Program: The Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) provides grants to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs) to help them become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen the institution's academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability.

Priority: This notice contains one competitive preference priority. The competitive preference priority is from 34 CFR 75.226.

Competitive Preference Priority: For FY 2015 and any subsequent year in which we make awards from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition, this priority is a competitive preference priority. Under 34 CFR 75.105(c)(2)(i), we award three additional points to an application that meets this priority.

This priority is:

Competitive Preference Priority -- Supporting Strategies for which there is Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness (3 additional points).

Projects that propose a process, product, strategy, or practice supported by moderate evidence of effectiveness (as defined in this notice).

Note: Applicants seeking to address this competitive preference priority should identify a minimum of one up to a maximum of two studies that support their proposed project and meet the definition of “moderate evidence of effectiveness.” Applicants should clearly identify if they are addressing the priority on the one-page abstract submitted with the application. All cited studies must also be submitted with the application as a PDF. If the Department determines that an applicant has provided insufficient information, the applicant will not have an opportunity to provide additional information at a later time.

To qualify as moderate evidence of effectiveness, among other things, a study’s evaluation design must meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Evidence Standards (as defined in this notice). The What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook describes in detail which types of study designs can meet WWC Evidence Standards with or without reservations including both quasi-experimental design studies and randomized controlled trials (as defined in this notice). The WWC review protocol for individual studies in the postsecondary education topic area, which describes the specific types of outcomes, populations, and other criteria that will be used by the Department to

determine whether a study meets WWC Evidence Standards, can be found at:

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/wwc_peer_protocol_v3.0.pdf.

Applicants may cite studies that (1) have already been determined by the Department to meet the WWC Evidence Standards (e.g., studies listed in the WWC-reviewed studies database or in the WWC database under the postsecondary topic area as having met WWC standards with or without reservations) or (2) have not yet been reviewed by the Department but that the applicant thinks will meet the WWC Evidence Standards. In the case of studies that have not yet been reviewed, the Department will review the studies to determine if they meet WWC Evidence Standards, in accordance with the procedures described under Review and Selection Process in section IV of this notice. In both cases, the studies will be reviewed by the Department to determine if they also meet the other requirements of the definition for “moderate evidence of effectiveness.”

In order to receive the three additional points under this competitive preference priority, applicants should propose to implement the strategy from their supporting study or studies as closely as possible and describe in the narrative response to this priority how they will do so.

Where modifications to a cited strategy will be made to account for student or institutional characteristics, resource limitations, or other special factors, the applicant should provide a justification or basis for the modifications in the narrative response to this priority. Modifications may not be proposed to the core aspects of any cited strategy.

Definitions: These definitions are from 34 CFR 77.1(c) and apply to the priority in this notice.

Large sample means an analytic sample of 350 or more students (or other single analysis units), or 50 or more groups (such as classrooms or schools) that contain 10 or more students (or other single analysis units).

Moderate evidence of effectiveness means one of the following conditions is met:

(i) There is at least one study of the effectiveness of the process, product, strategy, or practice being proposed that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations, found a statistically significant favorable impact on a relevant outcome (with no statistically significant and overriding unfavorable impacts on that outcome for relevant populations in the study or in other studies of the intervention reviewed by and reported on by the What Works Clearinghouse), and

includes a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive the process, product, strategy, or practice.

(ii) There is at least one study of the effectiveness of the process, product, strategy, or practice being proposed that meets the What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations, found a statistically significant favorable impact on a relevant outcome (with no statistically significant and overriding unfavorable impacts on that outcome for relevant populations in the study or in other studies of the intervention reviewed by and reported on by the What Works Clearinghouse), includes a sample that overlaps with the populations or settings proposed to receive the process, product, strategy, or practice, and includes a large sample and a multi-site sample. (Note: multiple studies can cumulatively meet the large and multi-site sample requirements as long as each study meets the other requirements in this paragraph.)

Multi-site sample means more than one site, where site can be defined as an LEA, locality, or State.

Quasi-experimental design study means a study using a design that attempts to approximate an experimental design by identifying a comparison group that is similar to the treatment group in important respects. These studies,

depending on design and implementation, can meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards with reservations (but not What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations).

Randomized controlled trial means a study that employs random assignment of, for example, students, teachers, classrooms, schools, or districts to receive the intervention being evaluated (the treatment group) or not to receive the intervention (the control group). The estimated effectiveness of the intervention is the difference between the average outcomes for the treatment group and for the control group. These studies, depending on design and implementation, can meet What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards without reservations.

What Works Clearinghouse Evidence Standards means the standards set forth in the What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook (Version 3.0, March 2014), which can be found at the following link:

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/DocumentSum.aspx?sid=19>.

Program Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1057-1059d (title III, part A, of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA)).

Note: In 2008, the HEA was amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) (P.L. 110-315). The HEOA made a number of technical and substantive revisions to

SIP, and the program regulations in 34 CFR part 607 have not yet been updated to reflect these statutory changes.

Applicable Regulations: (a) The Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 75, 77, 79, 81, 82, 84, 97, 98, and 99. (b) The Office of Management and Budget Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and amended as regulations of the Department in 2 CFR part 3485. (c) The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 CFR part 200, as adopted and amended in 2 CFR part 3474. (d) The regulations for this program in 34 CFR part 607.

II. Award Information

Type of Award: Discretionary grants—Individual Development Grants and Cooperative Arrangement Development Grants.

Estimated Available Funds: \$18,197,309.

Contingent upon the availability of funds and the quality of applications, we may make additional awards in FY 2016 from the list of unfunded applicants from this competition.

Individual Development Grants:

Estimated Range of Awards: \$400,000–\$450,000 per year.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$425,000 per year.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding \$450,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the Federal Register.

Estimated Number of Awards: 36.

Cooperative Arrangement Development Grants:

Estimated Range of Awards: \$600,000-\$650,000 per year.

Estimated Average Size of Awards: \$625,000 per year.

Maximum Award: We will reject any application that proposes a budget exceeding \$650,000 for a single budget period of 12 months. The Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education may change the maximum amount through a notice published in the Federal Register.

Estimated Number of Awards: 3.

Note: The Department is not bound by any estimates in this notice.

Project Period: Up to 60 months for each type of award.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants: (a) This program is authorized by title III, part A, of the HEA. To qualify as an eligible institution under any title III, part A program, an institution must be--

(i) Accredited or pre-accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association that the Secretary has determined to be a reliable authority as to the quality of education or training offered;

(ii) Legally authorized by the State in which it is located to be a junior or community college or to provide an educational program for which it awards a bachelor's degree;

(iii) Designated as an "eligible institution" by demonstrating that it has: (A) an enrollment of needy students as described in 34 CFR 607.3; and (B) low average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate student as described in 34 CFR 607.4.

Note: For purposes of establishing eligibility for this competition, the notice inviting applications for eligibility designation for FY 2015 was published in the Federal Register on November 3, 2014 (79 FR 65197) and applications were due on December 22, 2014. Only institutions that submitted the required application and received designation through this process are eligible to submit applications for this competition.

(b) A grantee under the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Program, which is authorized under title

V of the HEA, may not receive a grant under any HEA, title III, part A program, including SIP. Furthermore, a current HSI Program grantee may not give up its HSI grant to receive a grant under SIP or any title III, part A program as described in 34 CFR 607.2(g)(1).

An eligible HSI that is not a current grantee under the HSI Program may apply for a FY 2015 grant under all title III, part A programs for which it is eligible, as well as receive consideration for a grant under the HSI Program. However, a successful applicant may receive only one grant as described in 34 CFR 607.2(g)(1).

(c) An eligible IHE that submits an application for an Individual Development Grant and a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant may be awarded both grants.

(d) An eligible IHE that currently has a SIP Individual Development Grant may apply for and be awarded a Cooperative Development Grant. A grantee with an Individual Development Grant or Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant may be a partner or subgrantee in one or more Cooperative Arrangement Development Grants. The lead institution in a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant must be an eligible institution. Partners or subgrantees are not required to be eligible institutions.

2. a. Cost Sharing or Matching: This program does not require cost sharing or matching unless the grantee uses a portion of its grant for establishing or improving an endowment fund. If a grantee uses a portion of its grant for endowment fund purposes, it must match those grant funds with non-Federal funds (20 U.S.C. 1059c(c) (3) (B)).

b. Supplement-Not-Supplant: This program involves supplement-not-supplant funding requirements. Grant funds shall be used so that they supplement and, to the extent practical, increase the funds that would otherwise be available for the activities to be carried out under the grant and in no case supplant those funds (34 CFR 607.30(b)).

IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package: You can obtain an application via the Internet using the following address: www.Grants.gov. If you do not have access to the Internet, please contact one of the program contact persons listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

Individuals with disabilities can obtain a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) by contacting one of the program contact persons listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission:

Requirements concerning the content of an application, together with the forms you must submit, are in the application package for this program.

Page Limit: The application narrative (Part III of the application) is where you, the applicant, address the selection criteria and the competitive preference priority that reviewers use to evaluate your application. We have established the following mandatory page limits for Individual Development Grant and Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant applications:

- If you are not addressing the competitive preference priority you must limit your application narrative to no more than 50 pages for an Individual Development Grant application and to no more than 70 pages for a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant application.
- If you are addressing the competitive preference priority you must limit your application narrative to no more than 55 pages for an Individual Development Grant

application and 75 pages for a Cooperative Arrangement Development Grant application.

Applicants should provide information addressing the competitive preference priority in the section of the application titled "Competitive Preference Priority—Supporting Strategies for which there is Moderate Evidence of Effectiveness."

For the purpose of determining compliance with the page limit, each page on which there are words will be counted as one full page. Applicants must use the following standards:

- A "page" is 8.5" x 11", on one side only, with 1" margins at the top, bottom, and both sides. Page numbers and an identifier may be within the 1" margins.
- Double space (no more than three lines per vertical inch) all text in the application narrative, except titles, headings, footnotes, quotations, references, and captions. Text in charts, tables, figures, and graphs in the application narrative may be single spaced and will count toward the page limit.
- Use a font that is either 12 point or larger, and no smaller than 10 pitch (characters per inch). However, you may use a 10-point font in charts, tables, figures, graphs, footnotes, and endnotes.

- Use one of the following fonts: Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, or Arial. An application submitted in any other font (including Times Roman or Arial Narrow) will not be accepted.

The page limit applies to all of the application narrative section, including your complete response to the selection criteria and the competitive preference priority. However, the page limit does not apply to Part I, the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424-cover sheet); the Department of Education Supplemental Information Form (SF 424); Part II, the Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs Form (ED 524); Section A - Budget Summary - U.S. Department of Education Funds; Section B - Budget Summary - Non-Federal Funds; and Section C - Budget Narrative; Part IV, the assurances and certifications; the one-page program abstract; or bibliography. The page limit also does not apply to any copies of studies that are submitted in response to the competitive preference priority. However, if you include any attachments or appendices not specifically listed in this section or requested in the application package, these items will be counted as part of your application narrative for the purpose of the page-limit requirement.

Note: The Budget Information-Non-Construction Programs Form (ED 524) Sections A-C are not the same as the narrative response to the Budget section of the selection criteria.

We will reject your application if you exceed the page limit.

3. Submission Dates and Times:

Applications Available: [INSERT DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Deadline for Transmittal of Applications: [INSERT DATE 45 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

Applications for grants under this program must be submitted electronically using the Grants.gov Apply site (Grants.gov). For information (including dates and times) about how to submit your application electronically, or in paper format by mail or hand delivery if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, please refer to section IV. 7. Other Submission Requirements of this notice.

We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements.

Individuals with disabilities who need an accommodation or auxiliary aid in connection with the application process should contact one of the program

contact persons listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice. If the Department provides an accommodation or auxiliary aid to an individual with a disability in connection with the application process, the individual's application remains subject to all other requirements and limitations in this notice.

Deadline for Intergovernmental Review: [INSERT DATE 105 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

4. Intergovernmental Review: This program is subject to Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. Information about Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs under Executive Order 12372 is in the application package for this program.

5. Funding Restrictions: (a) General. We specify unallowable costs in 34 CFR 607.10(c). We reference additional regulations outlining funding restrictions in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

(b) Applicability of Executive Order 13202. Applicants that apply for construction funds under the title III, part A, HEA programs must comply with Executive Order 13202, as amended. This Executive order provides that recipients of Federal construction funds may not "require or prohibit bidders, offerors, contractors, or subcontractors to enter into or adhere to agreements with

one or more labor organizations, on the same or other construction project(s)" or "otherwise discriminate against bidders, offerors, contractors, or subcontractors for becoming or refusing to become or remain signatories or otherwise to adhere to agreements with one or more labor organizations, on the same or other related construction project(s)." Projects funded under this program that include construction activity will be provided a copy of this Executive order and will be asked to certify that they will adhere to it.

6. Data Universal Numbering System Number, Taxpayer Identification Number, and System for Award Management: To do business with the Department of Education, you must--

a. Have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);

b. Register both your DUNS number and TIN with the System for Award Management (SAM) (formerly the Central Contractor Registry (CCR), the Government's primary registrant database;

c. Provide your DUNS number and TIN on your application; and

d. Maintain an active SAM registration with current information while your application is under review by the

Department and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.

You can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet. A DUNS number can be created within one to two business days.

If you are a corporate entity, agency, institution, or organization, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service. If you are an individual, you can obtain a TIN from the Internal Revenue Service or the Social Security Administration. If you need a new TIN, please allow two to five weeks for your TIN to become active.

The SAM registration process can take approximately seven business days, but may take upwards of several weeks, depending on the completeness and accuracy of the data entered into the SAM database by an entity. Thus, if you think you might want to apply for Federal financial assistance under a program administered by the Department, please allow sufficient time to obtain and register your DUNS number and TIN. We strongly recommend that you register early.

Note: Once your SAM registration is active, you will need to allow 24 to 48 hours for the information to be available in Grants.gov and before you can submit an application through Grants.gov.

If you are currently registered with SAM, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you will need to update your registration annually. This may take three or more business days.

Information about SAM is available at www.SAM.gov. To further assist you with obtaining and registering your DUNS number and TIN in SAM or updating your existing SAM account, we have prepared a SAM.gov Tip Sheet, which you can find at: <http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/sam-faqs.html>.

In addition, if you are submitting your application via Grants.gov, you must (1) be designated by your organization as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (2) register yourself with Grants.gov as an AOR. Details on these steps are outlined at the following Grants.gov Web page: www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html.

7. Other Submission Requirements: Applications for grants under the Strengthening Institutions Program must be submitted electronically unless you qualify for an exception to this requirement in accordance with the instructions in this section.

a. Electronic Submission of Applications.

Applications for grants under the Strengthening Institutions Program, CFDA number 84.031A, must be submitted electronically using the Governmentwide Grants.gov Apply site at www.Grants.gov. Through this site, you will be able to download a copy of the application package, complete it offline, and then upload and submit your application. You may not email an electronic copy of a grant application to us.

We will reject your application if you submit it in paper format unless, as described elsewhere in this section, you qualify for one of the exceptions to the electronic submission requirement and submit, no later than two weeks before the application deadline date, a written statement to the Department that you qualify for one of these exceptions. Further information regarding calculation of the date that is two weeks before the application deadline date is provided later in this section under Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement.

You may access the electronic grant application for this competition at www.Grants.gov. You must search for the downloadable application package for this program by the CFDA number. Do not include the CFDA number's alpha suffix in your search (e.g., search for 84.031, not 84.031A).

Please note the following:

- When you enter the Grants.gov site, you will find information about submitting an application electronically through the site, as well as the hours of operation.

- Applications received by Grants.gov are date and time stamped. Your application must be fully uploaded and submitted and must be date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system no later than 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. Except as otherwise noted in this section, we will not accept your application if it is received--that is, date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system--after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. We do not consider an application that does not comply with the deadline requirements. When we retrieve your application from Grants.gov, we will notify you if we are rejecting your application because it was date and time stamped by the Grants.gov system after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date.

- The amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors, including the size of the application and the speed of your Internet connection. Therefore, we strongly recommend that

you do not wait until the application deadline date to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

- You should review and follow the Education Submission Procedures for submitting an application through Grants.gov that are included in the application package for this competition to ensure that you submit your application in a timely manner to the Grants.gov system. You can also find the Education Submission Procedures pertaining to Grants.gov under News and Events on the Department's G5 system home page at www.G5.gov.

- You will not receive additional point value because you submit your application in electronic format, nor will we penalize you if you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, as described elsewhere in this section, and submit your application in paper format.

- You must submit all documents electronically, including all information you typically provide on the following forms: the Application for Federal Assistance (SF 424), the Department of Education Supplemental Information for SF 424, Budget Information--Non-Construction Programs (ED 524), and all necessary assurances and certifications.

- You must upload any narrative sections and all other attachments to your application as files in a PDF read-only, non-modifiable format. Do not upload an interactive or fillable PDF file. If you upload a file type other than a read-only, non-modifiable PDF or submit a password-protected file, we will not review that material.

- Your electronic application must comply with any page-limit requirements described in this notice.

- After you electronically submit your application, you will receive from Grants.gov an automatic notification of receipt that contains a Grants.gov tracking number.

(This notification indicates receipt by Grants.gov only, not receipt by the Department.) The Department then will retrieve your application from Grants.gov and send a second notification to you by email. This second notification indicates that the Department has received your application and has assigned your application a PR/Award number (an ED-specified identifying number unique to your application).

- We may request that you provide us original signatures on forms at a later date.

Application Deadline Date Extension in Case of Technical Issues with the Grants.gov System: If you are experiencing problems submitting your application through Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Support Desk, toll free, at

1-800-518-4726. You must obtain a Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number and must keep a record of it.

If you are prevented from electronically submitting your application on the application deadline date because of technical problems with the Grants.gov system, we will grant you an extension until 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, the following business day to enable you to transmit your application electronically or by hand delivery. You also may mail your application by following the mailing instructions described elsewhere in this notice.

If you submit an application after 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date, please contact the persons listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice and provide an explanation of the technical problem you experienced with Grants.gov, along with the Grants.gov Support Desk Case Number. We will accept your application if we can confirm that a technical problem occurred with the Grants.gov system and that that problem affected your ability to submit your application by 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, on the application deadline date. The Department will contact you after a determination is made on whether your application will be accepted.

Note: The extensions to which we refer in this section apply only to the unavailability of, or technical problems with, the Grants.gov system. We will not grant you an extension if you failed to fully register to submit your application to Grants.gov before the application deadline date and time or if the technical problem you experienced is unrelated to the Grants.gov system.

Exception to Electronic Submission Requirement: You qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, and may submit your application in paper format, if you are unable to submit an application through the Grants.gov system because--

- You do not have access to the Internet; or
- You do not have the capacity to upload large documents to the Grants.gov system;

and

- No later than two weeks before the application deadline date (14 calendar days or, if the fourteenth calendar day before the application deadline date falls on a Federal holiday, the next business day following the Federal holiday), you mail or fax a written statement to the Department, explaining which of the two grounds for an exception prevents you from using the Internet to submit your application.

If you mail your written statement to the Department, it must be postmarked no later than two weeks before the application deadline date. If you fax your written statement to the Department, we must receive the faxed statement no later than two weeks before the application deadline date.

Address and mail or fax your statement to: Nalini Lamba-Nieves, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW., room 6024, Washington, DC 20006-8513. FAX: (202) 502-7861.

Your paper application must be submitted in accordance with the mail or hand delivery instructions described in this notice.

b. Submission of Paper Applications by Mail.

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you may mail (through the U.S. Postal Service or a commercial carrier) your application to the Department. You must mail the original and two copies of your application, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address:

U.S. Department of Education
Application Control Center
Attention: (CFDA Number 84.031A)
LBJ Basement Level 1
400 Maryland Avenue, SW.
Washington, DC 20202-4260

You must show proof of mailing consisting of one of the following:

- (1) A legibly dated U.S. Postal Service postmark.
- (2) A legible mail receipt with the date of mailing stamped by the U.S. Postal Service.
- (3) A dated shipping label, invoice, or receipt from a commercial carrier.
- (4) Any other proof of mailing acceptable to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If you mail your application through the U.S. Postal Service, we do not accept either of the following as proof of mailing:

- (1) A private metered postmark.
- (2) A mail receipt that is not dated by the U.S. Postal Service.

If your application is postmarked after the application deadline date, we will not consider your application.

Note: The U.S. Postal Service does not uniformly provide a dated postmark. Before relying on this method, you should check with your local post office.

c. Submission of Paper Applications by Hand Delivery.

If you qualify for an exception to the electronic submission requirement, you (or a courier service) may

deliver your paper application to the Department by hand. You must deliver the original and two copies of your application by hand, on or before the application deadline date, to the Department at the following address:

U.S. Department of Education
Application Control Center
Attention: (CFDA Number 84.031A)
550 12th Street, SW.
Room 7039, Potomac Center Plaza
Washington, DC 20202-4260

The Application Control Center accepts hand deliveries daily between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, except Saturdays, Sundays, and Federal holidays.

Note for Mail or Hand Delivery of Paper Applications: If you mail or hand deliver your application to the Department--

(1) You must indicate on the envelope and--if not provided by the Department--in Item 11 of the SF 424 the CFDA number, including suffix letter, if any, of the competition under which you are submitting your application; and

(2) The Application Control Center will mail to you a notification of receipt of your grant application. If you do not receive this notification within 15 business days from the application deadline date, you should call

the U.S. Department of Education Application Control Center at (202) 245-6288.

V. Application Review Information

1. Selection Criteria: The selection criteria for this program are from 34 CFR 607.22(a)-(g). Applicants must address each of the following selection criteria. The total maximum number of points under the selection criteria is 100 points; the maximum score under each criterion is noted in parentheses. The complete text of the selection criteria is in the application package for this competition.

(a) Quality of the Applicant's Comprehensive Development Plan. (Maximum 25 Points) The extent to which--

(1) The strengths, weaknesses, and significant problems of the institution's academic programs, institutional management, and fiscal stability are clearly and comprehensively analyzed and result from a process that involved major constituencies of the institution;

(2) The goals for the institution's academic programs, institutional management, and fiscal stability are realistic and based on comprehensive analysis;

(3) The objectives stated in the plan are measurable, related to institutional goals, and, if achieved, will

contribute to the growth and self-sufficiency of the institution; and

(4) The plan clearly and comprehensively describes the methods and resources the institution will use to institutionalize practice and improvements developed under the proposed project, including, in particular, how operational costs for personnel, maintenance, and upgrades of equipment will be paid with institutional resources.

(b) Quality of Activity Objectives. (Maximum 15 Points) The extent to which the objectives for each activity are--

(1) Realistic and defined in terms of measurable results; and

(2) Directly related to the problems to be solved and to the goals of the comprehensive development plan.

(c) Quality of Implementation Strategy. (Maximum 20 Points) The extent to which--

(1) The implementation strategy for each activity is comprehensive;

(2) The rationale for the implementation strategy for each activity is clearly described and is supported by the results of relevant studies or projects; and

(3) The timetable for each activity is realistic and likely to be attained.

(d) Quality of Key Personnel. (Maximum 7 Points) The extent to which--

(1) The past experience and training of key professional personnel are directly related to the stated activity objectives; and

(2) The time commitment of key personnel is realistic.

(e) Quality of Project Management Plan. (Maximum 10 Points) The extent to which--

(1) Procedures for managing the project are likely to ensure efficient and effective project implementation; and

(2) The project coordinator and activity directors have sufficient authority to conduct the project effectively, including access to the president or chief executive officer.

(f) Quality of Evaluation Plan. (Maximum 15 Points) The extent to which--

(1) The data elements and the data collection procedures are clearly described and appropriate to measure the attainment of activity objectives and to measure the success of the project in achieving the goals of the comprehensive development plan; and

(2) The data analysis procedures are clearly described and are likely to produce formative and summative

results on attaining activity objectives and measuring the success of the project on achieving the goals of the comprehensive development plan.

(g) Budget. (Maximum 8 Points) The extent to which the proposed costs are necessary and reasonable in relation to the project's objectives and scope.

2. Review and Selection Process: We remind potential applicants that in reviewing applications in any discretionary grant competition, the Secretary may consider, under 34 CFR 75.217(d)(3), the past performance of the applicant in carrying out a previous award, such as the applicant's use of funds, achievement of project objectives, and compliance with grant conditions. The Secretary may also consider whether the applicant failed to submit a timely performance report or submitted a report of unacceptable quality.

In addition, in making a competitive grant award, the Secretary also requires various assurances including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

Awards will be made in rank order according to the average score received from an evaluation performed by a

panel of non-Federal reviewers based on responses to the selection criteria and, if applicable, the competitive preference priority. If an application is scored highly, has the possibility of being funded, and includes a response to the competitive preference priority, IES will review the studies cited in the application to determine whether they meet the "moderate evidence of effectiveness" standard. Only those applications that address the competitive preference priority and have the possibility of being funded because of high scores and available funds for new awards will undergo further review by IES. At least one study submitted must be found to meet the definition of "moderate evidence of effectiveness," in order for applicants to receive the additional points.

Tie-breaker for Development Grants. In tie-breaking situations for Development Grants, 34 CFR 607.23(b) requires that we award one additional point to an application from an IHE that has an endowment fund of which the current market value, per full time equivalent (FTE) enrolled student, is less than the average current market value of the endowment funds, per FTE enrolled student, at comparable type institutions that offer similar instruction. We also award one additional point to an application from an IHE that has expenditures for library

materials per FTE enrolled student that are less than the average expenditure for library materials per FTE enrolled student at similar type institutions. We also add one additional point to an application from an IHE that proposes to carry out one or more of the following activities--

- (1) Faculty development;
- (2) Funds and administrative management;
- (3) Development and improvement of academic programs;
- (4) Acquisition of equipment for use in strengthening management and academic programs;
- (5) Joint use of facilities; and
- (6) Student services.

For the purpose of these funding considerations, we use 2012-2013 data.

If a tie remains after applying the tie-breaker mechanism above, priority will be given in the case of applicants for: (a) Individual Development Grants, to applicants that have the lowest endowment values per FTE student; and (b) Cooperative Arrangement Development Grants, to applicants in accordance with section 394(b) of the HEA, if the Secretary determines that the cooperative arrangement is geographically and economically sound or will benefit the applicant institution.

3. Special Conditions: Under 2 CFR 3474.10, the Secretary may impose special conditions and, in appropriate circumstances, high-risk conditions on a grant if the applicant or grantee is not financially stable; has a history of unsatisfactory performance; has a financial or other management system that does not meet the standards in 2 CFR part 200, subpart D; has not fulfilled the conditions of a prior grant (34 CFR 607.24(c)(2)); or is otherwise not responsible.

VI. Award Administration Information

1. Award Notices: If your application is successful, we notify your U.S. Representative and U.S. Senators and send you a Grant Award Notification (GAN); or we may send you an email containing a link to access an electronic version of your GAN. We may notify you informally, also.

If your application is not evaluated or not selected for funding, we notify you.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements: We identify administrative and national policy requirements in the application package and reference these and other requirements in the Applicable Regulations section of this notice.

We reference the regulations outlining the terms and conditions of an award in the Applicable Regulations

section of this notice and include these and other specific conditions in the GAN. The GAN also incorporates your approved application as part of your binding commitments under the grant.

3. Reporting: (a) If you apply for a grant under this competition, you must ensure that you have in place the necessary processes and systems to comply with the reporting requirements in 2 CFR part 170 should you receive funding under the competition. This does not apply if you have an exception under 2 CFR 170.110(b).

(b) At the end of your project period, you must submit a final performance report, including financial information, as directed by the Secretary. If you receive a multi-year award, you must submit an annual performance report that provides the most current performance and financial expenditure information as directed by the Secretary under 34 CFR 75.118. The Secretary may also require more frequent performance reports under 34 CFR 75.720(c). For specific requirements on reporting, please go to www.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html.

4. Performance Measures: The Secretary has established the following key performance measures for assessing the effectiveness of the Strengthening Institutions Program:

a. The percentage change, over the five-year period, of the number of full-time degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled at SIP institutions. Note that this is a long-term measure, which will be used to periodically gauge performance;

b. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students at four-year SIP institutions who were in their first year of postsecondary enrollment in the previous year and are enrolled in the current year at the same SIP institution;

c. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students at two-year SIP institutions who were in their first year of postsecondary enrollment in the previous year and are enrolled in the current year at the same SIP institution;

d. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students enrolled at four-year SIP institutions graduating within six years of enrollment;

e. The percentage of first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduate students enrolled at two-year SIP institutions graduating within three years of enrollment;
and

f. The cost per successful program outcome: Federal cost per undergraduate and graduate degree at SIP institutions.

5. Continuation Awards: In making a continuation award under 34 CFR 75.253, the Secretary considers, among other things: whether a grantee has made substantial progress in achieving the goals and objectives of the project; whether the grantee has expended funds in a manner that is consistent with its approved application and budget; and, if the Secretary has established performance measurement requirements, the performance targets in the grantee's approved application. In making a continuation grant, the Secretary also considers whether the grantee is operating in compliance with the assurances in its approved application, including those applicable to Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department (34 CFR 100.4, 104.5, 106.4, 108.8, and 110.23).

VII. Agency Contacts

For Further Information Contact: Nalini Lamba-Nieves, Pearson Owens, or Don Crews, U.S. Department of Education, 1990 K Street, NW., room 6024, Washington, DC 20006-8513. You may contact these individuals at the following email addresses and telephone numbers:

Nalini.Lamba-Nieves@ed.gov; (202) 502-7562

Pearson.Owens@ed.gov; (202) 502-7804

Don.Crews@ed.gov; (202) 502-7574

If you use a TDD or a TTY, call the FRS, toll free, at 1-800-877-8339.

VIII. Other Information

Accessible Format: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document and a copy of the application package in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) on request to either program contact person listed under For Further Information Contact in section VII of this notice.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the Federal Register. Free Internet access to the official edition of the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations is available via the Federal Digital System at: www.gpo.gov/fdsys. At this site you can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the Federal Register, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

You may also access documents of the Department published in the Federal Register by using the article

search feature at: www.federalregister.gov. Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Delegation of Authority: The Secretary of Education has delegated authority to Jamienne S. Studley, Deputy Under Secretary, to perform the functions and duties of the Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary Education.

Dated: April 20, 2015.

Jamienne S. Studley,
Deputy Under Secretary.

4000-01-U

[FR Doc. 2015-09492 Filed:
4/22/2015 08:45 am;
Publication Date: 4/23/2015]